

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3 and 11 have been amended. No claims have been added or canceled. Accordingly, claims 1-20 are currently pending in the application.

Priority

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's acknowledgment of the claim for priority and receipt of the priority document.

Information Disclosure Statement

Applicants would appreciate the Examiner's acknowledgment of the document listed on the PTO-1449 Form filed with the Amendment filed February 12, 2004. A copy of the PTO-1440 Form is enclosed for the Examiner's convenience.

Specification

Applicants believe a typographical error was made on the Office Action Summary sheet with regard to the specification as no further clarification was included in the body of the Office Action. The abstract had been amended in Applicants' previously submitted amendment. Applicants respectfully request clarification by the Examiner.

35 U.S.C. §§102 and 103

Claims 1-10 and 13-20 stand rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Itonori et al (U.S. Patent No. 5,943,443). Claims 11 and 12 stand rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Itonori et al in view of Kubota (U.S. Patent No. 6,041,323). These rejections are traversed as follows.

As stated in the previously filed response, according to the present invention, a document information retrieval method is realized which allows for OCR character recognition errors and enables a search within a practical length of time even when the search character string is long. This is accomplished while at the same time reducing the chance of documents being missed during the search (see specification page 4, line 25 to page 5, line 4).

Claim 1 recites a referencing device that refers to a similarity table, the similarity table previously storing groups of similar partial character strings, each of the groups of similar partial character strings being derived from each of the plurality of partial character strings obtained from the character string dividing device by changing at least one of the characters of each partial character string to a different character which is similar in shape. The groups of

similar partial character strings are strings of characters in groups that are similar to one another.

On the other hand, Itonori et al and Kubota disclose groups of representative characters that are each followed by similar characters. (See, for example, Fig. 6 of Itonori et al). It is submitted that groups of similar partial character strings do not correspond to groups of representative characters each followed by similar characters. As such, Itonori et al and Kubota cannot realize the advantages of the presently claimed invention of enabling a search within a practical length of time even when the search character string is long while at the same time reducing a chance of documents escaping the search. As such, it is submitted that the pending claim patentably define the present invention over the cited art.

**Conclusion**

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants contend that the above-identified application is

now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, reconsideration and reexamination are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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